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ABSTRACT

The development and implementation of an inservice program to assist teachers in translating general provincial social studies guides, "Experiences in Decision Making," into specific units of instruction are described. The rationale for using a series of video tapes on unit planning and a matched series of print materials was to make effective use of mass media knowledge sources, complemented by lead teachers providing interpersonal communication vital to teacher adoption of the innovative materials. The objectives, components, program guide, planning chart, and lead teacher activities are outlined in the program description. The four-step sequence of the operation, involving pre-broadcast activities, discussion with lead teachers, broadcast viewing, and follow-up activities, are described in a case study of a local school system. Evaluation techniques included a pretest and post test on the content of the videotapes, staff interviews, and an opinionnaire administered to lead teachers. Recommendations are suggested to improve the satisfactory results of the inservice program. (KSM)

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AN INSERVICE PROGRAM COMBINING MASS MEDIA AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Presented at the

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in

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by

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AN INSERVICE PROGRAM
COMBINING MASS MEDIA AND
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

> A combination of mass media and interpersonal communication channels is the most effective way of reaching people with new ideas and persuading them to utilize these innovations.
>
> - Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1971, the Provincial Department of Education, Alberta, introduced a new Social Studies Curriculum, Experiences in Decision Making (1971). Experiences in Decision Making was, in essence a guide or handbook which incorporated a general description of the program. It was left to local boards and teachers to implement the program which was based on a values clarification process. The assumption was, apparently, that teachers were adequate program developers, and that individual teachers should generate their own programs. No materials for use by pupils were provided.

The authors were approached by a local school district to design an inservice program for teachers that would assist them translating the general provincial guide into specific units of instruction.

II. RATIONALE

The work done by Rogers (1962) and by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) on diffusion of innovations suggested to the authors a theoretical base for designing components of the inservice program desired. Rogers and Shoemaker's summary of research indicates support for the view that there are stages in the adoption of an innovation, and that different channels

of communication are particularly effective at these different stages. They see the innovation-decision process moving through four stages:

1. Knowledge. The individual is exposed to the innovation's existence and gains some understanding of how it functions.

2. Persuasion. The individual forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation.

3. Decision. The individual engages in activities which lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation.

4. Confirmation. The individual seeks reinforcement for the innovation-decision he has made. (Rogers and Shoemaker, 101-103)

Rogers (1962) points out that impersonal mass media channels of communication are most efficient dispensers of knowledge about an innovation, and therefore most effective at the first stage as a way of "calling various decision alternatives to the attention of individuals." (p. 99) Rogers concludes that:

> A generalization supported by many studies is that impersonal information sources are most important at the awareness stage, and personal sources are most important at the evaluation stage in the adoption process. (Rogers, 1962, p. 99)

The Rogers and Shoemaker model for diffusion of innovations indicates the importance of interpersonal communication to move adopters beyond awareness of the innovation, or a knowledge stage, to an acceptance stage. Their model predicts that interpersonal communication with a lead teacher is more likely to succeed in a persuasion capacity than is a mass media channel of communication such as TV or print. Adoption of an innovation is most likely when the source of an innovation is similar or homophilous to receivers (school staffs). This suggested to the authors that a teacher in each building be used as an opinion leader, or lead teacher, specially trained in the use of the inservice materials to be designed. To promote this desired similarity, it was intended that lead teachers be selected by their school

staffs. These lead teachers would then use the mass media to provide the knowledge of the innovation (units designed to engage children in making decisions on value issues), while the lead teachers provided the interpersonal communication apparently vital to adoption. The authors decided to design a series of video tapes on unit planning and a matched series of print materials to attempt to make effective use of mass media knowledge sources, yielding a three-pronged approach: lead teachers, video tapes, and print materials. The training sessions for lead teachers need to be designed to provide (a) some success in using the inservice program to achieve goals important to the lead teachers (planning units they can use in their teaching) so that they will convey enthusiasm for the innovation to school staffs; (b) develop competence in unit building so they feel competent to work with school staffs; and (c) provide training in leadership so they will have some idea of how to fill the lead teacher role when the programs are aired.

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Objectives

To determine whether or not an effective inservice training program could be provided via a television series (video tapes) that included:

a. Taped programs
b. Program guides
c. A lead teacher
d. A high degree of teacher involvement

From the point of view of the school system financing the project, incentives were:

a. A continuous up-grading of staff.
b. Economies with regard to curriculum and consultative staff.
c. A method of inservice for urban teachers which could be more effective than invitational inservice methods.
d. Provision of a means of self-directed inservice.

Components

The program that developed was named Essentially Yours referring to the responsibility of developing units to be essentially that of the teacher. It consisted of the following components:

a. Video tapes

Thirteen television episodes which were also available on video tape were produced. The titles are indicative of the episode content.

Program Title

1. Introduction to Program Goals
2. Selecting Unit Titles
3. Diagnosis
4. Selecting Knowledge Objectives
5. Selecting Skill Objectives
6. Selecting Valuing Objectives
7. Planning an Opener
8. Selecting Content
9. Concept formation
10. Generalizing
11. Skill Development
12. Value and Feeling Strategies
13. Evaluation

The programs followed two teachers (a) an experienced first grade teacher, and (b) an inexperienced fifth grade teacher as they planned their social studies units. Excerpts from classrooms demonstrating specific classroom techniques, interaction patterns, kinds of openers, diagnostic activities, and use of materials were used. An announcer provided continuity and defined viewer tasks at the end of each program.

b. Program Guides

A guide book for each program was prepared. Each guide contained

i. Program objectives in performance terms. e.g.

Upon completing this program you should be able to:

1. give one reason why the new curriculum emphasizes decision-making.
2. refute three of the objections raised to the new program.
3. state one reason why value issues instead of topics are explored.
4. list three (3) criteria for accepting a value issue as a topic of study.
5. select a unit title appropriate to the requirements of the new social studies program.

ii. Pre-broadcast activities. e.g.

Read Experiences in Decision Making
Elementary Social Studies Handbook
Province of Alberta pp. 5, 9, 11, 18 and 30

Read attached article "Social Action For the Primary Schools," by B. Joyce, Childhood Education 46, no. 5 February, 1970, pp. 117-122

Study the attached article
Values and Teaching by Raths et al.
Toronto: Bell and Howell, 1966, pp. 194-196

Review the attached article, "Developing Inquiry Method in the Classroom," from B. Goldmark, Social Studies: a Method of Inquiry. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1968, p. 131.

Have your students prepare an activity in which they state on each individual card a problem in their daily lives which they face sometimes, never, always.

Sort all of the cards into categories like family problems, school problems, friend problems, etc.

Do most youngsters face a lot of similar problems?

iii. Follow-up activities. e.g.

Place a check-mark next to the titles below that meet the criteria of selection indicated in the T. V. program.

14. Should we allow pets to be raised in apartment blocks?
15. Should grandparents live along?
16. Should all students be required to salute the flag in school?
17. Should our Home-School meeting open with a religious invocation?
18. Should parents censor the TV shows we view at home and/or the books we read?

53. Should volunteer organizations be allowed?
54. Should national holidays be observed?
55. Should Hutterites be allowed to expand their operations?

Place on your planning chart the title you have selected as a unit of study for your class.

c. Planning Chart (see attached)

The planning chart was designed for teachers to record components of a unit framework developed in each episode.

d. Lead Teachers

It was expected that school systems using the series would make available lead teachers who were knowledgeable of the program to work with teachers at the building level following each program.

IV. OPERATION

It was envisioned that the following sequence would take place.

1. Teachers would become familiar with the program objectives (See (i) above) and complete the pre-broadcast activities (See (ii) above).
2. Teachers would then meet with the lead teacher to discuss the program objectives and pre-broadcast activities. Further clarification and sharing of ideas were to take place at this session.
3. The program was to be viewed. Programs were shown once at noon and once in the evening on the local ETV station. Additionally, video tapes were available for use at other times.
4. Following the viewing grade level groups would meet to discuss the program, complete follow-up activities (See (iii) above) and appropriate material on the planning chart. The lead teacher would be available to these groups as a consultant.

V. EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

Background

The purpose of this section is to describe the use of the Essentially Yours inservice program in one school system.

The Edmonton Catholic School System is an urban jurisdiction consisting of approximately 60 schools and 750 elementary school teachers. In 1964 when a new social studies program was introduced the system's response was to form teacher grade levels committees who took as their task the translating of the provincial program into resource units. These resource units were distributed to teachers who used them as the basis for planning teaching units for their particular grade. When the 1971 program was introduced the resource unit approach was rejected because: (a) there was concern that the resource units were used as recipe books by teachers who in fact did very little planning, and (b) the new program was predicated upon the assumption that the teacher was responsible for program development. The preface to the program states:

> ...teachers and students can practice responsible decision-making by planning together learning experiences which are significant and relevant to their own lives. (Experiences in Decision Making, p. 5)

The school system employed one supervisor for the social studies responsible for grades K-12 who faced the problem of assisting all the elementary teachers implement the new program.

The school system's involvement in the financing of a local ETV station resulted in the supervisor exploring that medium as the basis for an inservice program. For assistance the supervisor approached the authors at the University of Alberta.

Use of Program

a. Selection and Training of Lead Teachers.

From January, 1972 to April, 1973, the TV segments and Guidebooks were developed. The supervisor either identified teachers he knew to be interested in social studies himself, or asked principals to do so. Thirty lead teachers were thus selected to participate in training sessions before the airing of the programs. The supervisor used these released-time sessions to have the lead teachers view all programs and work on their planning charts. Lead teachers were expected to do the prereadings and other pre and post broadcast activities on their own. During the viewing most lead teachers viewed the program with their staff. Following the viewing lead teachers attempted to answer questions raised by staff members.

b. Scheduling

Programs were telecast one per week with repeat showings one at lunch time and the second early in the evening. Video tapes were used by several school staffs for late afternoon viewing. Teachers were not released from regular duties to participate in the inservice program. Lunch hours and out-of-class time was used for staff participation.

c. Role of Principals

Principals met with the supervisor after the program had begun and received a description of the approach taken.

Their cooperation was requested in arranging for the sessions in their schools. Some delegated full responsibility to the lead teacher, while others worked with the lead teacher to encourage staff participation and to assist teachers with post viewing planning.

VI. EVALUATION

Evaluation Techniques

Evaluation techniques included:

1. A pretest and post test on the content of the episodes of Essentially Yours.
2. Interviews with selected staffs during which the staffs were invited to comment frankly upon the program.
3. An opinionnaire which focussed on reaction to the televised programs (tapes), the guide book, the planning chart and the lead teacher inservice. The opinionnaire was responded to by the lead teacher group.

Outcomes

Pretest and Post Test.

Lead Teacher performance on the pretest and post test, for six of the episodes, was subjected to a t-test for two correlated samples to probe for any significant difference in the two results. The t-test provided a t of 9.2 for 31 df, which indicated an improvement significant at the .0005 level. In considering the result, it should be noted that the "hot-house" conditions were operative. The results were provided by the lead teacher group at its special inservice session prior to the series being introduced into the Separate School System at large. After

taking the pretest, the lead teachers were able to go through the pre-reading for each episode, view the episode and perform practical post program activities before taking the post test. However, even allowing for these conditions, it would appear that these results indicate that the program has the potential to increase teachers' knowledge of content, theory, techniques and strategies which are essential in planning units to implement the curriculum Experiences in Decision Making.

Interviews:

The interviews indicated that successful implementation of Essentially Yours depended heavily upon the performance of the pre-reading for each episode. The pre-reading was judged to be a valuable aid in itself.

However, the staffs indicated consistently that the guide books were too detailed to be grasped fully at one reading. The detail was judged to be useful, but required some time to internalize and prepare for application to the practical planning situation.

Favourable comments were made consistently about the practical techniques which were demonstrated in the various episodes. There was some criticism of the small groups which were used, but the teachers liked the demonstration of techniques. It was indicated strongly that a program devoted entirely to techniques for handling the values clarification process, in particular, would be extremely useful. The general impression gained was that Essentially Yours was a sound move towards practical help for teachers.

Most of the criticisms concerning the program were directed towards its implementation and the evaluation techniques which accompanied it. The program was introduced in March, when elementary teachers' time schedules are becoming crowded with end of year activities and basic planning for the year's work was past. Teachers claimed that they did not have sufficient time to do the pre-reading or post program activities thoroughly. Teachers apart from the lead teachers at their special inservice generally did not respond to the pre and post test documents because of shortage of time.

Comments concerning the chart were not, on the whole, favourable. Apparently the chart did not show up clearly in the episodes. The sequence was not clear to the participants and it was claimed that referrals to the chart throughout the series were vague. It was felt by some that the chart provided too rigid a structure. The comment was made that many teachers worked with very general objectives to start with and sharpened them as units developed.

Lead teachers did not feel fully secure after their special inservice. It was felt that several inservices might be necessary before lead teachers would be fully experienced and capable of providing effective after a single application.

Opinionnaire

In the opinionnaire, teachers were asked to react to each section in terms of a five point scale:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly agree

Part I - Televised Programs:

Comment on this section indicated that in general, the programs were well received. The only unfavorable reactions were concerned with (a) the inability to raise questions during the presentations (85% of responses at the unfavorable end of the scale.) and (b) speech and personal traits of actors which interfered with learning (90% of responses unfavorable).

Part II - Teachers' Guide

Reaction was generally favorable, most teachers responding in either the "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" categories.

Part III - Planning Chart

Eighty percent of the teachers polled responded in the "Agree" category. This contrasted with the comments made in the personal interviews with staffs, where the reaction was less favorable.

Part IV - Lead Teacher Inservice

The reaction of the lead teachers was generally favorable. The main criticism concerned insufficient time between sessions to complete planning chart assignments. Seventy percent of respondents claimed to have experienced problems with lack of time.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following preliminary and tentative recommendations based upon the Edmonton Catholic School System's experience with the inservice design are suggested:

1. The innovation diffusion model developed by Rogers and Shoemaker emphasizes the importance of interpersonal communication at the persuasion stage, and the results

of this study support this principle. Lead teachers need training in leadership to function successfully in this role, and need to be selected in such a way that their colleagues readily accept them in this role.

2. There needs to be a good matching up of the amount of time the program is to take and the amount of time teachers are able to invest. To be used successfully, Essentially Yours required more time than teachers had to invest in pre-readings, group meetings, viewing, and follow-up activities. Either more time for teachers, or a less complex program might be more successful.
3. Timing the introduction of the inservice program may be important. Essentially Yours was initially aired in April-May-June as the school year drew to a close. It is being used by some school staffs this fall with somewhat better teacher reception.
4. Administrative support in terms of enthusiastic endorsement and provision of time for staff participation seems important. Teachers reported varying amounts of such support, with consequent variations in staff response.
5. A variety of formats in which the series' materials could be used should be designed and made available to teachers. Some groups were dissatisfied with the weekly presentation of programs but were at a loss as to how they might reorganize the series using the video tapes.

6. The need for the inservice program should come from the teachers concerned. Imposition of inservice programs from a central authority tends to build resentment and results in less than total involvement by teachers.

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